

The Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art Presents Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi

News Release

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Exhibition unveils the newly conserved painting Danaë by Orazio Gentileschi

Cleveland (April 9, 2021) – Four years of conservation at the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA) has transformed Orazio Gentileschi's *Danaë* ^[1] from a work with yellowed varnish and discolored retouching back to a virtuoso painting featuring crisp drapery and delicate skin tones. The focused exhibition ***Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*** ^[2] debuts the newly conserved painting. Both Orazio and his daughter, Artemisia, returned to and reworked certain themes and compositions throughout their careers. In the exhibition, *Danaë* is at the center of five paintings by father and daughter, on loan from museums and collections around the country, that distill the artists' capacities to modify and manipulate figures over time in various compositions. A digital component elucidates this process for viewers, who can then study the masterpieces closely in the intimate exhibition. ***Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*** is on view from April 11 to August 22 in the Julia and Larry Pollock Focus Gallery.

"The comprehensive treatment of *Danaë* has restored the painting's compositional clarity and spatial depth as well as the artist's tonal variations and modeling," said William M. Griswold, director of the CMA. "The exhibition presents a wonderful opportunity for visitors to learn about the conservation of an Italian Baroque masterpiece and enjoy it alongside other works by the master and his daughter, Artemisia."

Like many artists of the period, Orazio used cartoons or tracings to create replicas of successful works. The CMA's *Danaë* is the second version of a painting that the artist made in Genoa around 1621–22. Orazio's spare compositions focus on light and texture and incorporate figures from his earlier paintings. His distinctive combination of naturalistic elegance and drama inspired a tremendous demand for both new work and copies by the artist. Both *Danaë* and the much-copied *Penitent Magdalene*, a little-known iteration of which is featured in the exhibition, are examples of subsequent versions of popular paintings by the artist.

In addition to copying his own work, Orazio adapted his models for new compositions. For example, the exhibition explores how the figure in *Young Woman with a Violin (Saint Cecilia)* from the Detroit Institute of Arts is transformed in *Judith and Her Maidservant with the Head of Holofernes* from the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art. Artemisia, who was an eminent painter and trained in her father's studio, adopted these practices but developed her own intensely expressive style. The figure in her *Danaë*, on loan from the Saint Louis Art Museum, departs stylistically from her father's depiction of Danaë but closely relates to the figure in the Etro Collection's painting *Death of Cleopatra*, which is attributed to Orazio or Artemisia and reproduced in the exhibition. A formal comparison of the two *Danaës* reveals significant differences in the painting of flesh tones and drapery, with Artemisia's fabric stiffer than Orazio's and her heroine's body depicted with greater naturalism.

"It is moving to see familiar figures echo across paintings by Orazio and Artemisia and, as they are woven into new narratives throughout the exhibition, how they evolve to take on remarkably different emotional and stylistic roles," said Cory Korkow, curator of European paintings and sculpture, 1500–1800.

The digital component in ***Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*** features three case studies comparing six paintings that illustrate how Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi reworked, reused and repeated images and forms to create new works. Visitors are encouraged to approach the artworks and look closely to discover relationships.

Please view the [press kit](#) ^[3] for more information about ***Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*** and to learn about the process of conserving *Danaë*.

Generous support is provided by an anonymous gift in honor of Professor Edward J. Olszewski.

All exhibitions at the Cleveland Museum of Art are underwritten by the CMA Fund for Exhibitions. Major annual support is provided by the Estate of Dolores B. Comey and Bill and Joyce Litzler, with generous annual funding from Mr. and Mrs. Walter R. Chapman Jr., the Jeffery Wallace Ellis Trust in memory of Lloyd H. Ellis Jr., Ms. Arlene Monroe Holden, Eva and Rudolf Linnebach, William S. and Margaret F. Lipscomb, Tim O'Brien and Breck Platner, the Womens Council of the Cleveland Museum of Art, and Claudia Woods and David Osage.

Generous support for public programs related to this exhibition is provided by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

Complementary Virtual Programming

The Material Lives of Objects ^[4]

Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 6 p.m. (EDT), FREE

Register ^[5]

Art objects tell stories not only in the narratives displayed on their surfaces, but also in their transformations as material objects over time.

Join the CMA's Eric and Jane Nord Chief Conservator Sarah Scaturro, associate conservator of Asian paintings Sara Ribbans and former senior conservator of paintings Marcia Steele as they highlight recently conserved works now on view in the exhibitions *Stories from Storage* ^[6] and *Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi* ^[2]. Together, they share the new stories and the hidden histories that their research and treatments have revealed and discuss the differences between Western and Eastern painting conservation methods, tools and approaches.

Desktop Dialogue: Rethinking Artistic Traditions

Wednesday, May 19, 12:00 p.m. (EDT)

What value does historical art have for contemporary artists and audiences?

In his realist paintings, Mario Moor ^[7] he shows how traditional artistic practices can be powerful vehicles for exploring timeless themes and the provocative issues of today.

Join Moore in conversation with CMA curator Cory Korkow as they discuss Moore's work, the relevance of historical paintings, and the exhibition *Variations: The Reuse of Models in Paintings by Orazio and Artemisia Gentileschi*. ^[2]

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About the Cleveland Museum of Art

The Cleveland Museum of Art is renowned for the quality and breadth of its collection, which includes more than 63,000 artworks and spans 6,000 years of achievement in the arts. The museum is a significant international forum for exhibitions, scholarship and performing arts and is a leader in digital innovations. One of the top comprehensive art museums in the nation, recognized for its award-winning Open Access program and free of charge to all, the Cleveland Museum of Art is located in the University Circle neighborhood.

The museum is supported in part by residents of Cuyahoga County through a public grant from Cuyahoga Arts & Culture and made possible in part by the Ohio Arts Council (OAC), which receives support from the State of Ohio and the National Endowment for the Arts. The OAC is a state agency that funds and supports quality arts experiences to strengthen Ohio communities culturally, educationally and economically. For more information about the museum and its holdings, programs and events, call 888-CMA-0033 or visit cma.org ^[8].

[Press Announcements](#) ^[9]

Source URL: <https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit/cleveland-museum-art-presents-variations-reuse-models-paintings-orazio-and-artemisia-gentileschi>

Links

- [1] <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1971.101>
- [2] <https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/variations-reuse-models-paintings-orazio-and-artemisia-gentileschi>
- [3] <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/36pfa0zcmi636n6/AAAopkCKryXmZediUdz9rRSua?dl=0>
- [4] <https://www.clevelandart.org/events/virtual-events/the-material-lives-of-objects>
- [5] <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-material-lives-of-objects-registration-147619962281>
- [6] <https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/stories-storage>
- [7] <http://www.mariomoorestudio.com/>
- [8] <https://www.clevelandart.org>
- [9] <https://www.clevelandart.org/about/press/media-kit>